MATERIALS AND METHODS

Earlier literature pertaining to the Gulf of Mannar was perused for species distribution and index cards were prepared. Specimens collected from this region by earlier workers and deposited at various herbaria (the Central National Herbarium, Botanical Survey of India, Howrah (CAL), herbarium of the Botanical Survey of India, Southern Circle, Coimbatore (MH), that of the Presidency College, Madras (PCM), the Rapinat Herbarium, St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirapalli (RHT) as well as the herbaria of the Bharathiar University, Coimbatore and Kongunadu Arts & Science College, Coimbatore were studied and information was added to the already prepared index cards.

The mainland coast from Dhanushkodi to Kanyakumari as well as the existing 19 islands of the biosphere reserve were explored periodically from 1993 to 1996 covering various seasons. The mainland coast was collected for up to 3 km from the sea depending upon the natural vegetation present. A total of 13 field trips were conducted and 3,030 field numbers comprising about 9,750 specimens were collected. All the specimens were processed and mounted following customary methods (Fosberg & Sachet, 1965). Field observations on phenology, habitat, associated species, distribution pattern, frequency etc. were noted down. Uses and local names were confirmed as far as possible after making enquiries with the local people.

Specimens were identified using Gamble's flora of the Presidency of Madras (1915-36), Matthew's flora of the Tamilnadu Carnatic (1983) and other related works. These were later confirmed with authentic specimens at MH. Novelties and additions to Indian flora were got confirmed by experts. Duly labelled 2 sets of voucher specimens are deposited at MH and CAL.